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The Party System. By HILAIRE BELLOC and CECIL CHESTERTON.
(London: Stephen Swift, 1911. Pp. 226.)

Without any disparagement of Mr. Cecil Chesterton it can be said that it is Mr. Belloc's contribution to *The Party System* that gives it its value, because Mr. Belloc was of the House of Commons from 1906 to 1910. But both authors are thoroughly convinced of the insincerity and unreality of the game of politics, as they see it played; and they take the Veto Conference of last year as typical of the understanding that exists in what they describe as the governing group in the House of Commons—that is, the two front benches, the Treasury and the Front Opposition. If the view is accepted that there is an understanding between the leaders of the Liberals and the leaders of the Conservatives,—and there is some ground for it,—that popular mandate or no mandate, democratic and social reform shall proceed only at a measured gait—a gait carefully regulated by the governing group—the Veto Conference of 1910 is an excellent instance of how this bi-partisan understanding works. The Liberals in the Parliament elected in January, 1910, could not have retained office for a week without the support of the Nationalists and the Labor party. Yet neither of these groups was consulted before the Veto Conference was agreed upon between the Treasury and the Front Opposition benches; and neither Nationalist nor Labor party was represented in the Conference. There was no mandate for the Conference, and had the country realized that the election in January might result in a secret conference in which eight men of the governing group were to settle the issue with the Lords and then agree to force the settlement through Parliament, there would have been little enthusiasm for the Liberal party in the constituencies.

There is, however, nothing new in the Belloc-Chesterton discovery. An understanding that the gait of reform shall be slow and as little disturbing as practicable to vested political interests is at least as old as the Reform Act of 1832. It was in existence as long as the Whigs dominated Liberal Cabinets—a domination which survived at least to 1895; and an even better example of how the understanding worked than the Veto Conference of last year is to be found in the history of the great popular movement against the House of Lords in 1884. The Lords then rejected Gladstone's bill for the extension of the franchise. Immediately the popular figures in the Liberal party—Morley, Chamberlain, Bright and Dilke,—took to the platform and raised the cry

that the House of Lords without delay must be "mended or ended." For months during the summer and autumn of 1884, England and Scotland were kept at white heat by these popular demonstrations against the Lords; but while the leaders of this movement were so engaged, Gladstone, Hartington and Granville and Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote—of the governing group of that day—were in conference, as may be read in Morey's "Gladstone," and Lang's "Earl of Idesleigh." So successful was their conference as regards safeguarding the House of Lords that the attack on it completely fizzled. It fizzled so miserably that Liberals and Radicals lost all hope of reform of the House of Lords and the movement was not renewed until the Lords rejected the Budget of 1909.

The Veto Conference of 1910, which so greatly incenses Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton, was only the afternoon teas in Downing Street and the secret midnight conference between Gladstone and Northcote at St. James's palace of November 12, 1884, over again in a slightly different form. Admittedly Liberals and Radicals in the constituencies who take politics seriously are used and then humbugged by the governing group. That was so in 1884; and there is reason to think that it would have been so as regards the Veto Conference if the Liberal party had not been dependent on the votes of the Nationalists and the Labor party. In 1884 there was no one to make the relations between the two front benches popularly known. The general histories say little about them; and they cannot be traced in any individual memoir of the period. The aim of the Belloc-Chesterton book is to analyze this understanding, how it comes into existence, how it is maintained, and how it is worked and to whom accrue the gains—offices, honors, political and social prestige and the like. The book is written with verve and with remarkable freedom. It might be described as audacious, for there is no withholding of names when the authors need instances of how the understanding works. There is much in it that is as obviously true as entries in the Journals of the House of Commons, that neither wing of the governing group could deny. Particularly true are the chapters which describe how the party system as now developed and worked from the center attaches the rank and file of members of the House of Commons to this or that wing of the governing group—attaches them as tenaciously as members were thirled to a Newcastle or a Dundas in the Unreformed House of Commons; how discussion in the House that might be inconvenient or embarrassing to the governing group is prevented; which detail and emphasize

the barter and sale of peerages and baronetcies to the newly-rich; and trace the intimate family relationships—chiefly those of brother-in-law and cousin that serve to bind the governing group and make admission to it a matter of coöption. There is also much that is true with qualification; and there is some exaggeration. But the book was written from the inside. One of its authors has been through the mill of the Liberal Central Office in London—from which elections are managed—through the Liberal organization in a constituency, and of the House of Commons; and despite any drawbacks, the book embodies much that is valuable concerning party machinery, party finance, the making of official party programmes, the relation of political parties to the press, and the management of Parliamentary battalions in the years immediately preceding the contest between the Commons and the Lords of 1911.

EDWARD PORRITT.

Second Chambers. By J. A. R. MARRIOTT. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910. Pp. viii, 312.)

The obvious timely interest with which this volume is invested by the impending reconstruction of the British House of Lords leads the author to explain that his book is offered to the public at the present time in the hope that it may contribute to the solution of the important problems involved in that movement. He wants it distinctly understood, nevertheless, that the present treatise is by no means a mere "livre de circonstance," but is a fragment of a larger work which has claimed much of his leisure for some years and will be published in its entirety within a reasonable time.

Mr. Marriott's expressed purpose is to supply facts tending to throw light upon the universal acceptance by civilized nations of the principle bi-cameral legislatures in the midst of great diversities of place and circumstances. This purpose he seeks to fulfill by the inductive process of describing the construction of modern constitutions and analyzing with great particularity the composition and functions of their upper legislative houses. Historical developments which seem to account for characteristic features of individual second chambers are carefully traced. Especial attention is directed to the experiences of those countries which have tried the experiment of uni-cameral legislatures, and to the influences which finally, in every instance,